U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-053-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC68262

PROJECT NAME: Independence Unit Pipeline

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 2 S., R. 96 W.,
Sec. 19, lot 18, 19;
Sec. 30, lot 7, 9, 10, 16, 17.

T. 3 S., R. 96 W.,
Sec. 18, lot 9, 10, 12, N½NE¼;
Sec. 19, NE¼NE¼.

T. 2 S., R. 97 W.,
Sec. 36, lot 5, 12.

T. 3 S., R. 97 W.,
Sec. 1, lot 1, E½E½;
Sec. 12, E½E½;
Sec. 13, NE¼NE¼.

APPLICANT: Exxon Mobil Corporation

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): None

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: ExxonMobil submitted an APD for the Independence Unit Well T52X-29G. The pipeline for this well was not addressed in ea WRFO-04-204; therefore, a new EA has to be completed for the pipeline.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for a 4-inch buried pipeline from the well pad at the T52X-29G well that runs approximately 42,000 feet to tie into the PCU Plant gas gathering system at the T57X-19G well in Gardenhire Gulch. The right-of-way width will be 50 feet for

42,000 feet in length encompassing 48.21 acres, more or less. The term of the right-of-way will be for 30 years

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the pipeline would not be authorized to be built.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: An application has been received for a pipeline from the Independence Unit to a well location in Gardenhire Gulch which is part of the Piceance Creek Unit for Exxon Mobil.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special air quality designations or non-attainment areas in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline route has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Bott 2004, Compliance Dated 10/18/2004) with no new cultural resources identified during the inventory

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed pipeline project will not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone,

with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Noxious weeds known to occur in the project area include yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), and mullein (*verbascum thapsus)*. The invasive annual cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) occurs on unrevegetated disturbed areas throughout the project area primarily associated with roads, and oil and gas pipelines and locations.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create a large amount of soil disturbance providing numerous sites for the establishment and proliferation of noxious and invasive species. This negative impact will be negligible if the proposed mitigation is applied and implemented in a timely manner.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. *If trees are to be dragged back onto the pipeline right of way, seeding must be completed and verified by BLM prior tree replacement.* Monitor the ROW for a minimum of 5 years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species. Eradicate all such species using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: An array of migratory birds fulfill nesting functions in the project area's, basin big sagebrush/greasewood, Wyoming big sagebrush, pinyon-juniper woodland, and chained pinyon-juniper/mixed shrub communities from late May through early August. Species associated with these shrubland and woodland communities are typical and widely represented in the Resource Area and region. Those bird populations identified as having higher conservation interest (i.e., Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program) include Brewer's sparrow and Virginia's warbler in the shrubland types and gray flycatcher, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, and violet-green swallow in the woodlands. These birds, too, are well distributed at appropriate densities in this Resource Area's extensive like-habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Project construction would be initiated in March 2005 with completion anticipated by late April 2005. As scheduled, this project would be completed prior to all but the earliest of migratory bird nesting activity (i.e., pinyon jay). In the case of pinyon jay, these birds nest in loose traditional colonies that are often extensive. Although not specifically inventoried for pinyon jay, BLM biologists conducting

raptor surveys during the winter of 2004/2005 failed to note any small corvid-like nests and it is somewhat unlikely that this area is used by nesting jays. Further, pinyon jays are aggressive re-nesters and a disrupted nest attempt is less likely to have strong ramifications on an individual's or population's breeding success.

Even with unanticipated project delays, because about 75% of the pipeline alignment closely parallels existing trails and roads (i.e., low nest density in close proximity to ongoing disturbances) and another 13% of the line is encompassed by a recent burn (low nest density and no species of high conservation interest) this project would have a decidedly low level of impact on the nesting activities of migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to disrupt migratory bird nest activity.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animals that are known to inhabit or derive important benefit from the project vicinity.

The pipeline intersects 4 stands of pinyon-juniper, 1 of which (Bailey Ridge) possesses sufficiently well developed woodland structure that offers potential as nest or roost habitat for northern goshawk and 3 bats (i.e., fringed and Yuma myotis, Thompson's big-eared) that are included on BLM's sensitive species list. The roosts and hiberacula of these species are almost solely associated with caves, buildings, and underground mines. Woodland roost sites are expected to offer only limited day roost opportunity during the spring through fall months. There is some evidence to suggest that bat roost trees may be more often situated within the interior of stands rather than on the stand margins.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on animals listed under the Endangered Species Act. Approximately 7 acres of mature woodland would be cleared, virtually all of which involves widening existing fenceline, pipeline, or road corridors by 50 feet. Although the potential for goshawk nest activity in close proximity to this pipeline alignment is remote, BLM will inventory affected woodland stands for functional nest sites. In the event sites are discovered where construction activity would be synchronous with the nesting season, timing limitations would be imposed until the status of the nest site was established and, in the case of active use, extended through the nesting season as appropriate to avoid nest failure.

Considering the nearly 250,000 acres of pinyon-juniper woodland in Piceance Basin, the narrow widening of pre-existing corridors is unlikely to have any substantive influence on the availability of roost substrate or the suitability of stands for bat roosting activity. Alternative

pipeline alignments in this area would likely increase the extent of mature woodland clearing as well as bisect the interiors of contiguous woodland stands.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have any further influence on woodland habitats that may serve as nest or roost habitat for BLM sensitive species.

Mitigation: Prior to surface disturbance, BLM biologists will survey woodland stands on Bailey Ridge and the ridge dropping into Piceance Creek from the south for woodland raptor nest activity. Activities that have potential to adversely influence nest occupation would be deferred until nest status is ascertained. Standard timing limitation buffers would be applied to active nests until chicks become independent of the nest site.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Although it is likely that this project locale has a relatively low potential to support special status animals, the area currently meets the standards for mature woodland associates. Woodland clearing attributable to pipeline installation has been planned to parallel existing forms of disturbance as much as possible, thereby minimizing functional losses in habitat utility and extent. Surveys would ensure that current year reproductive efforts of woodland raptors would progress unimpeded. With the application of resource provisions, the proposed action would have negligible cumulative influence on the functional capacity of habitats to support nesting goshawk and roosting bats and would therefore allow for continued meeting of this land health standard.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline crosses perennial sections of Piceance Creek and Stewart Gulch on private property. Other ephemeral drainages the pipeline crosses include Cottonwood, Sorghum, and Gardenhire Gulches. In the early 80's the United States Geological Survey, (USGS) collected periodic water quality and water quantity data for these drainages. Historic data indicate these streams to be well within the standards set by the State.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts to water quality from development of this pipeline would be similar to other surface disturbing activities. Some of the impacts would be exposure of soil surface to wind and water erosion, reduced water quality due to erosion of sediment and salt, off pipeline right of way, and piping or rill erosion where pipeline disturbance are exposed to climatic elements. These impacts would be short term until re-vegetation has occurred.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from not allowing the proposed action.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action will have no effect on the watershed's ability to meet these water quality standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no BLM-administered riparian or wetland communities that have potential to become directly or indirectly involved with project implementation.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Because the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable probability of influencing intermittent or perennial systems that are capable of supporting riparian or wetland communities, application of the land health standard is not applicable.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on

populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils have been mapped in an order III soil survey by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and are available from the office for review. Refer to the table below for the type of soils affected by the proposed action.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological Site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
6	Barcus channery loamy sand	2-8%	Foothills Swale	<2	Slow	Moderate	>60
15	Castner channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Medium to rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
36	Glendive fine sandy loam	-----	Foothills Swale	2-4	Slow	Slight	>60
64	Piceance fine sandy loam	5-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	20-40
66	Potts-Begay fine sandy loams	2-7%	Loamy Saltdesert/ Sandy Saltdesert	<2	Medium	Moderate	>60
70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
73	Rentsac channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills	-----	Rapid	Very high	10-20

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Short-term impacts would be expected from any surface disturbing activity. Impacts from the proposed action would be loss of the protective vegetation cover, possible increase in salt and sedimentation during storm events and soil compaction from equipment. These impacts could continue until successful re-vegetation has occurred. Re-establishment of vegetation as soon as conditions are allowable would be favorable for controlling any erosion problems that may occur.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: In the no-action alternative, neither the surface disturbance nor impacts to soils resources would occur.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action will have no effect on the soils' ability to meet the land health standard.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline crosses a variety of ecological sites but they are predominately pinyon-juniper woodland and rolling loam. Once the line crosses to the north side of Piceance Creek, it is in a Foothill Swale ecological site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will create about 50 acres of soil disturbance which, if it is not revegetated promptly, will provide safe sites for the establishment and proliferation of noxious and invasive species. If the proposed mitigation is completed in a timely manner, there will be no significant negative impact on the affected vegetation communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. If trees are to be dragged back onto the pipeline right of way, seeding must be completed and verified by BLM prior tree replacement. Monitor the ROW for a minimum of 5 years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species. Eradicate these species using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

Seed Mix #	Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
3	Western wheatgrass (Rosanna) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Utah sweetvetch	2 2 2 1 1 1	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*: Plant communities in the project area currently meet the Standard and are expected to meet the Standard in the future.*

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no BLM-administered aquatic communities that would have any reasonable probability of being directly or indirectly influenced by the project implementation (the nearest consolidated federal holding being over 15 miles downstream in Piceance Creek).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Because the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable probability of influencing aquatic habitats, application of the land health standards is not applicable.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The bulk of this project is encompassed by general big game winter ranges that are occupied primarily from September through January. Deer distribution is generally confined down valley through February, but beginning in March and extending through early May, deer reoccupy the lower valleys along the southern margin of the Piceance Triangle, including Gardenhire Gulch.

The proposed alignment involves a wide range of vegetation communities that are occupied permanently or seasonally by a host of nongame mammals and birds. These species are common and widely distributed in extensive habitats throughout Piceance Basin and there is no evidence suggesting there are narrowly endemic or highly specialized species occurring in the project vicinity.

Raptor nest substrate associated with the project is primarily composed of pinyon-juniper woodlands; the project would involve no cliff nest sites of golden eagle or red-tailed hawk. Woodland habitat best suited for raptor nest use (i.e., mature stands) is confined to Bailey Ridge (T3S, R96W section 20), particularly that east-west segment that diverges from the ridgeline road. With the exception of 0.5 mile of ridgeline and generally submature woodland on the steep descent into Piceance Creek, woodland habitat between this point and the T52X-29G well have been chained or recently burned. The proposed pipeline alignment has not yet been inventoried for woodland raptor nest activity, but in all cases, the right-of-way parallels existing forms of disturbance (i.e., pipelines, roads, and fencelines). Based on BLM's experience, woodland nesting raptors tend to avoid selecting nest sites along ridgeline crests and in close proximity to breaks in canopy, and in the event this project is delayed into the raptor nesting season (beginning in late April), it remains unlikely that nests that could be potentially influenced by pipeline construction would be encountered along this alignment. BLM biologists will inventory these woodlands prior to project initiation and, if necessary, timing limitations buffers (as conditions of approval) would be imposed around functional raptor nest sites potentially influenced by these activities.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The prevailing 2004/2005 winter weather conditions have been marked by the long and early development of unseasonably mild temperatures (since February), including early emergence of herbaceous forage and diminished snowpack. Although deer use will be prevalent in the drainages draining south into the Piceance Creek valley during project timeframes (March and April), snowpack would not impede travel for deer temporarily displaced by activity. Deer appear to be in remarkably good condition for this time of year and minor elevation of energy demands attributable to avoidance of this localized pipeline project (relative to severe winter range) would have no effective influence on

big game nutrition or energy balance. Although the level of activity associated with pipeline installation would be more intensive and persistent in the short term, the proposed alignment is along a frequently traveled and maintained well access road corridor, a situation that likely reduces the overall detrimental affect of this activity further. These conditions meet the exception criteria for the WRFO severe winter range timing limitation stipulation and it is recommended that no timing limitation be applied to this action.

Although the potential for raptor nest activity in close proximity to this pipeline alignment are likely low, BLM will inventory affected woodland stands for functional nest sites. In the event sites are discovered where construction activity would be synchronous with the nesting season, timing limitations would be imposed until the status of the nest site was established and, in the case of active use, extended through the nesting season as appropriate to avoid nest failure.

Surface disturbance associated with right-of-way clearing on BLM lands would temporarily remove woody and herbaceous growth on about 45 acres, including: 11 acres of woodland, 9 acres of basin big sagebrush bottomland, 7 acres of recently burned chainings, and 16 acres of chained pinyon-juniper. The extent and location of pipeline clearing activity would represent a minor and short-term reduction in the herbaceous forage base for all resident wildlife. Although redevelopment of an effective shrub canopy (e.g., woody forage base for big game and nest substrate for nongame birds) would span 10 years (basin big sagebrush) to several decades (chainings), nearly all disturbances occur along established roadways where habitat utility is presently compromised to some degree. New disturbance that does not represent a widening of an existing cleared corridor includes the 7-acre developing herbaceous type in the burn (virtually no change in functional habitat status) and about 1 acre of steeply sloped woodland dropping into the West Fork of Stewart Gulch. The proposed right-of-way is believed to be situated in locations that are not amenable to the development of a new unauthorized roads or trails and, as such, would not be expected to aggravate road-density effects on big game winter ranges.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to alter raptor nest habitat or disrupt big game distribution.

Mitigation: BLM biologists will inventory these woodlands prior to project initiation. Timing limitations buffers (as conditions of approval) will be imposed on functional raptor nest sites potentially influenced by these activities.

After standard reclamation practices are applied to surface disturbance, sufficient large woody debris would be redistributed across the pipeline right-of-way segment extending west from the Bailey Ridge road (E1/2 section 20, T3S R96W) to effectively deter subsequent vehicle use, including ATVs.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The land health standard for animal communities is currently being met across the proposed project area. Project implementation would, with effective reclamation, have no lasting consequence on the utility or suitability of habitat as a source of forage or cover for local big game and nongame animal populations. The no-action or proposed action alternatives would not detract from continued meeting of this standard.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management			X
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Transportation		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: BLM 1179A, 1179, 1109 and 1176 roads will be affected by this action. Additionally, approximately 30000 feet of the pipeline right-of-way traverses an "existing routes only" travel management area which means motorized travel is limited to routes that existed as identified in the 1997 WRRA RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An increase of heavy traffic can be expected along BLM roads 1179A, 1179, 1109 and 1176 while pipeline construction is underway. Post-construction, traffic levels would likely return to pre-construction levels. Road and trail proliferation may occur along the pipeline route in areas were pipeline crosses an existing road or trail.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: Signage will be placed where the pipeline crosses BLM roads 1179A, 1179, 1109 and 1176 indicating the pipeline is closed to motorized travel. BLM WRFO has examples of signage.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: As noted in the vegetation section, the proposed route would affect pinyon/juniper woodlands. The proposed route would cross approximately 27,145 feet of pinyon/juniper dominated land of which 20,615 feet are in the old chained area and 6,530 feet are in undisturbed woodlands of varying ages and densities.

On the ridge above Piceance Creek the woodlands contain short stature trees most of which are juniper. These stands have minimal amounts of suitable firewood estimated at 10 cords per acre . There are some junipers suitable for fence posts. The woodlands along the pipeline route draining into West Stewart contain an even mix of pinyon and juniper with greater quantities of firewood estimated at 14 cords per acre. There is no public access to these stands which limits the opportunities for removal of the dead material.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed route would not result in loss of any woodland products of commercial value. The need for preventing vehicular access of these pipelines is minimized by the lack of public access, and as such the trees removed during construction would not be drug back onto the right-of-way. The forest products would be purchased by the permit holder and treated as described below.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: All trees removed in the process of construction shall be purchased from the Bureau of Land Management. The trees shall be cut with a maximum stump height of six inches and disposed of by one of the following methods:

a. Trees must be cut before being dozed off the area of disturbance. Trees shall be cut into four-foot lengths, down to four inches in diameter and placed along the edge of the disturbance.

b. Purchased trees may be removed from federal land for resale or private use. Limbs may be scattered off the area of disturbance but not dozed off.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline is located in an area mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation meaning that it is known to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There is a potential to impact scientifically important fossil resources if it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation to excavate the pipeline trench a monitor shall be present for all such excavations.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the Piceance Mountain (06023) and Little Hills (06006) allotments .

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The principal impact impact of the proposed action involves allotment and pasture boundary fences essential for livestock management on the Public Lands. The proposed pipeline crosses at least five fences and may impact another one on the ridge between Sorghum and Scandard. The integrity of these fences is to be maintained at all times.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the existing situation.

Mitigation: Prior to cutting any fence, the fence will be braced (with H braces that meet BLM specifications) on either side of the proposed cut and the wire stretched and tied off. All fence work will meet BLM specifications. The fence specifications will be provided to the grantee. Fence work will be inspected by BLM to insure proper compliance.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The public will lose approximately 60 acres of dispersed recreation potential while pipelines are under construction. The public will most likely not recreate in the vicinity of these facilities and will be dispersed elsewhere. If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

With the introduction of new well pads and roads, an increase of traffic could be expected increasing the likihood of human interactions, the sights and sounds associated with the human environment and a less naturally appearing environment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in an area with a VRM III classification. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Only a short section of the pipeline ROW would be visible to a casual observer traveling along RBC road # 5, which would be the route most frequently traveled. Private property between RBC 5 and the proposed action would limit the volume of casual observers traveling on any other routes in close proximity to the pipeline ROW. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no additional environmental consequences.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Bott, Tracy
2004 Exxon-Mobil Corporation: Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed Independence Units T52X-29G and T51X-11G: Wells, Access, and Pipelines, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation, Rangeland Management
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Soils
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-053-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to

proceed by the authorized officer.

3. Prior to surface disturbance, BLM biologists will survey woodland stands on Bailey Ridge and the ridge dropping into Piceance Creek from the south for woodland raptor nest activity. Activities that have potential to adversely influence nest occupation would be deferred until nest status is ascertained. Standard timing limitation buffers would be applied to active nests until chicks become independent of the nest site.

4. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed action.

5. Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. *If trees are to be dragged back onto the pipeline right of way, seeding must be completed and verified by BLM prior tree replacement.* Monitor the ROW for a minimum of 5 years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species. Eradicate these species using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

Seed Mix #	Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
3	Western wheatgrass (Rosanna) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Utah sweetvetch	2 2 2 1 1 1	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)

6. BLM biologists will inventory these woodlands prior to project initiation. Timing limitations buffers (as conditions of approval) will be imposed on functional raptor nest sites potentially influenced by these activities.

7. Signage will be placed where the pipeline crosses BLM roads 1179A, 1179, 1109, and 1176 indicating the pipeline is closed to motorized travel. BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) has examples of signage.

8. All trees removed in the process of construction shall be purchased from the Bureau of Land Management. The trees shall be cut with a maximum stump height of six inches and disposed of by one of the following methods:

a. Trees must be cut before being dozed off the area of disturbance. Trees shall be cut into four-foot lengths, down to four inches in diameter and placed along the edge of the disturbance.

b. Purchased trees may be removed from federal land for resale or private use. Limbs may be scattered off the area of disturbance but not dozed off.

9. If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation to excavate the pipeline trench, a monitor shall be present for all such excavations.

10. Prior to cutting any fence, the fence will be braced (with H braces that meet BLM specifications) on either side of the proposed cut and the wire stretched and tied off. All fence work will meet BLM specifications. The fence specifications will be provided to the grantee. Fence work will be inspected by BLM to insure proper compliance.

11. After standard reclamation practices are applied to surface disturbance, sufficient large woody debris would be redistributed across the pipeline right-of-way segment extending west from the Bailey Ridge road (E1/2 section 20, T3S R96W) to effectively deter subsequent vehicle use, including ATVs.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years. Compliance on fence specifications will be provided by Mark Hafkenschiel.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 3/18/05

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of proposed action
Recommended fence - H Brace Designs

CO-110-2005-053-EA 19

Location of Proposed Action
CO-110-2005-053-EA